

# Throwing Some Light on the Two Rigvedic Gods: “Savitar” and Surya”

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## I. Introduction:

After reading the title of present essay, one would definitely get a basic question, “when **Savitar** and **Surya** the Two Rigvedic Gods are known for illuminating whole world, then how can anyone shed some light on them?

In Rigvedic Philosophy, these two characters have been described as the main source of heat and light for whole universe. In fact, the Composers of Rigved in many hymns have highlighted the point that, both **Savitar** and **Surya**, after a spell of night (Nakta/Ratri), daily bring back all the living beings including Plants, Dvipade (men and birds) and Chatuspade (animals) to routine life. In other words, in the text, they are actually projected as the real cause of energy and drive (show necessary direction to the moving things) for the forward movement of the life on Earth.

Please note that here the sequence of the composition of the **Ten Rigvedic Mandalas** is taken as **Mandala-2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 5, 8, 9, 1, and 10** with the consideration of **Mandala-2, 3, 4, 6, and 7** belonging to the class of **Five Early Mandalas**, and remaining five as the part of the **Five Late Mandalas**.

In **Rigved**, total **Eleven** Hymns are addressed to God **Savitar**, found in both classes of Rigvedic Mandalas i.e. the Early Mandalas (six hymns) and the Late Mandalas (five hymns). However, there are **Six independent Hymns** dedicated to God **Surya** plus in three other hymns the **Surya** has been lauded along with other Deities. But the hymns addressed to God **Surya** alone are present in the **Two Late Mandalas** (Mandala-1 and 10) only. Moreover, both characters do appear in the several hymns devoted to **Agni, Indra, Dawn/Usha, Asvins, Visvedevas** etc.

Many Vedic scholars who studied the text seriously are of the opinion that, from functionality point of view, Rigvedic Gods Savitar and Surya seem to be similar, but their basic characteristics are different. Whereas, based on description available in some selected verses, some scholars feel that Savitar starts performing his acts in the night, well before the arrival of Goddess Dawn/Usha in the world. However, some experts from India believe that both are one and the same.

In the present essay, using “**Out of the Box Thinking Approach**”, firstly an attempt has been made to read the minds of the Composers of Rigved, and secondly tried to solve the Rigvedic puzzle as well.

Griffith translation [1] is the main source of information for the present article. Additionally, wherever necessary, Monier Williams Dictionary has been referred to for understanding meaning of the original Vedic words found in the Sanskrit text. Griffith in his translation, at many places has used either **Surya** or **Sun** term to indicate Rigvedic God **Surya**.

## II. Relation of God Savitar and God Surya with God Agni:

Through the Five verses of the hymn **Rv-4.13** of **Mandala-4** addressed to God **Agni**, **Vamadeva Gotama** the Lead Composer of **Mandala-4** has brought the Three Rigvedic Gods namely **Agni**, **Savitar** and **Surya** on a common platform to indicate their close association. Following verses [1] tell us how God **Agni** along with God **Savitar** and God **Surya** arrive in the world and play their roles in daily life of the living things present in the world.

**Rv-4.13,1.** **Agni** hath looked, benevolently-minded, on the wealth-giving spring of radiant Mornings.  
Come, **Asvins**, to the dwelling of the pious: **Surya** the God is rising with his splendour.

**Rv-4.13,2 :** **Savitar**, God, hath spread on high his lustre, waving his flag like a spoil-seeking hero.  
Their stablished way go **Varuna** and **Mitra**, what time they make the **Sun** ascend the heaven.

**Rv-4.13,3:** Him whom they made to drive away the darkness, Lords of sure mansions, constant to their object,  
Him who beholds the universe, the **Sun-God**, seven strong and youthful Coursers carry onward.

**Rv-4.13,4:** Spreading thy web with mightiest Steeds thou comest, rending apart, thou God, the black-hued  
mantle.  
The rays of **Surya** tremulously shining sink, like a hide, the darkness in the waters.

**Rv-4.13,5:** How is it that, unbound and not supported, he falleth not although directed downward?  
By what self power moves he? Who liath seen it? He guards the vault of heaven, a close-set pillar

In the verse of hymn **Rv-1.95** dedicated to **Agni**, the Poet intimates us that as per the belief of **pre-Rigvedic Rishis**, **Agni** is born at three different places in the world as described below.

**Rv-1.95,3:** Three several places of his birth they honour, in **mid-air**, in the **heaven**, and in the **waters**

The verse **Rv-10.156,4** tells us that, it is God **Surya** who represents **Agni** in the Sky, and has been placed there to give light to all living beings.

**Rv-10.156,4:** **Agni**, thou hast made the **Sun**, **Eternal Star**, to mount the sky,  
Bestowing light on living men.

Through the verse **Rv-8.7,36** the Singer informs us that **Agni** was born first to spread the light everywhere, then **Surya** arrived.

**Rv-8.7,36:** **Agni** was born the first of all, like **Surya** lovely with his light:  
With lustre these have spread abroad.

In the verses of hymn **Rv-10.88**, the Rigvedic Poet has elaborated further natural relationship between God **Agni** and God **Surya** as follows.

**Rv-10.88,3** : Inspired by Gods who claim our adoration, I now will laud Eternal Lofty **Agni**,  
Him who hath spread abroad the earth with lustre, this heaven, and both the worlds, and air's mid-region.

**Rv-10.88,6**: Head of the world is **Agni** in the night-time; then, as the **Sun**, at morn springs up and rises.  
Then to his task goes the prompt Priest foreknowing the wondrous power of Gods who must be  
honoured.

**10.88,14**: We call upon the Sage with holy verses, **Agni Vaisvanara** the ever-beaming,  
Who hath surpassed both heaven and earth in greatness: lie is a **God below**, a **God above us**.

In short, the **Composers of Rigved** have clearly bifurcated the responsibilities of **Agni** and **Surya** so that there would not be any conflict or infighting between them; the former has been described to be active on land, whereas the latter though identified as another form of **Agni**, but purposely positioned in the Heaven to give light to whole world.

**Rv-2.35** is the complete hymn belonging to the **Earliest Mandala of Rigved**, dedicated to “**Apam Napat**” which literally means “**the Son of Waters**”, but generally believed to have devoted to God **Agni**. It means to say that, since pre-Rigvedic time, **Agni** is also known as “**the Son of Waters**” Two verses taken from the hymn **Rv-2.35** give clear picture about **Agni** and his Heavenly form [1].

**Rv-2.35,9** :The **Waters' Son hath risen**, and clothed in **lightning** ascended up unto the curled **cloud's bosom**;  
And bearing with them his supremest glory the Youthful Ones, **gold-coloured**, move around him.

**Rv-2.35,10**: Golden in form is he, like **gold** to look on, his colour is like **gold**, **the Son of Waters**.  
When he is seated fresh from **golden** birthplace those who present their **gold** give food to feed him.

In other words, golden colour **Agni** created during Yajna rite, and the lightning that occurs during rainy season are the one and the same. The verse **Rv-10.88,8** speaks about the spread of perception of **Agni** at the different regions of world, but is called by different names.

**Rv-10.88,8**: First the Gods brought the hymnal into being; then they engendered **Agni**, then oblation.  
He was their sacrifice that guards our bodies: him the heavens know, the earth, the waters know him.

Following verses taken from the different Mandalas point out God **Savitar** as “**the Son of Waters**” very similar to God **Agni** [1].

**Rv-1.22,6**:That he may send us succour, praise the **Waters' Offspring Savitar**;  
Fain are we for his holy ways

**Rv-6,50,13:** May this God **Savitar**, the Lord, the **Offspring of Waters**, pouring down his dew be gracious,  
And, with the Gods and Dames accordant, Tvastar; Dyaus with the Gods and **Prthivi with oceans**.

**Rv-10.149,2:** Well knoweth **Savitar**, O **Child of Waters**, where **ocean**, firmly fixt, overflowed its limit.  
Thence sprang the world, from that up rose the region: thence heaven spread out and the wide  
earth expanded.

Additionally, the Poet in the verse **Rv-10.158,1** requests **Surya**, **Vata** and **Agni** to provide necessary protection to all of them in different locations.

**Rv-10.158,1:** . May **Surya** guard us out of **heaven**, and **Vata** from the firmament,  
And **Agni** from terrestrial spots.

**Summing up** the topic, though **Agni**, **Savitar**, and **Surya** are projected as the three separate Gods in **Rigved**, but they share common attributes like giving **Heat and Light** to all the things present in the world. Based on the information available in the text, it can be easily said that, both **Savitar** and **Surya/Sun** are the celestial form of **Agni/fire** and hence they are portrayed as the real source of life on **Earth**. The Rigvedic Composers believed that **Savitar** and **Surya** rule the world from the sky, and **Agni** is the king of the Land/Earth.

It is to be noted here that, the Poets have treated God **Savitar** as “**the Son of Waters**” and **not** God **Surya/Sun**. This point needs special attention and hence would be discussed later on.

### **III. Important Features of God Savitar and God Surya- as described in Rigved:**

As discussed earlier, **Savitar** and **Surya** move in the sky, do exhibit some functional similarities or sameness in behaviour, but are introduced by the Rigvedic Singers as the Two Different Characters. Hence it is essential to know more about them from the ancient document.

#### **Savitar**

Important qualities and activities of God **Savitar** given in the verses of **Rigved** are as under.

**Rv-1.35,4:** God's **Gold Ratha** is drawn by **Harṁ ibhya** means Bay Asvas/steeds.

**Rv-1.35,7:** God is called as “**Asura**”.

**Rv-1.35,9:** Far-sighted, **Golden Handed God** moves between **Earth and Heaven**.

**Rv-1.35,10:** God is praised as “**Gold-handed Asura**”.

**Rv-1.35,11:** God occupies mid-region, but influences both Heaven and Earth with his action.

**Rv-1.110,3:** God gives immortality to the Ribhus (three brothers).

**Rv-1.113,1:** God comes up to send **Night/Nakta** away, and to create room for **Dawn/Usha**.

**Rv-4.14,2:** God is responsible for the production of Light for all the creature of World.

**Rv-4.53,1:** God is designated as sapient “**Asura**”.

**Rv-4.53,3:** God stretches his arms in the form of rays to protect the **life on Earth**.

**Rv-4.53,6:** God controls the Features of the world whether movable or non-movable.

**Rv-4.53,7:** The Poet credits the appearance of seasons in a Year to God **Savitar**.

**Rv-5.49,2:** God is termed as “**Asura**”.

**Rv-6.50,8:** The Poet tells “God approaches the People and uses his **golden hand** to rescue them”.

**Rv-7.52,3:** God has been indirectly mentioned as “**Aditya**” in the hymn dedicated to “**Adityas**”.

**Rv-7.76,1:** God sends his light upward which is meant for mortal and immortal.

**Rv-7.79,2:** God extends his arms to spread his radiance so that cattle can make movements.

**Rv-8.18,3:** Along with Bhaga, Mitra, Varuna, Aryaman; **Savitar** has been mentioned as “**Aditya**”

**Rv-8.27,12:** God has come up in the sky for the benefit of Biped and Quadruped.

**Rv-10.36,13:** God is called as “**Father of Truth**”.

**Rv-10.36,14:** God needs to make the people healthy, comfortable and give very long life.

### **Surya/Sun**

Significant attributes and functions of God **Surya** described in the verses of Rigved are as given below.

**Rv-1.46,10:** God appears golden in colour, removes darkness due to his light.

**Rv-1.50,4:** God illuminates all parts of the world.

**Rv-1.50,7:** God traverses in the sky, and sees all things that have birth.

**Rv-1.50.8 and 9:** God's Ratha is drawn by seven Bay Steeds or Bright Mares.

**Rv-1.50,13:** God is mentioned as “**Aditya**”.

**Rv-1.105,16:** Pathway of God is in Heaven.

**Rv-1.191,9:** God is mentioned as “**Aditya**”

**Rv-5.40,9:** God is denoted as “**Asura**”.

**Rv-5.45,9:** God uses **Seven Asvas to draw his Ratha** for his long journey.

**Rv-7.63,1:** God is the **Eye of Varuna and Mitra**.

**Rv-7.66,15:** **Seven Bay sisters** pull the **Ratha of God** to bring wealth and happiness.

**Rv-8.25,19:** God sends his light upward in the **Heaven**.

**Rv-8.27,20 and 21:** God is designated as “**Asura**”

**Rv-8.101,11:** God is great and true “**Aditya**” and his act is also great.

**Rv-8.101,12:** God spreads light which is unconquerable.

**Rv-10.3,2:** Since God sends light upward, he caters the needs of Heaven.

**Rv-10.37,1:** God serves as the **Eye of Mitra and Varuna**, and the **Son of Dyaus** as well.

## Re-looking at the Similar and Dissimilar Aspects of “Savitar” and “Surya”

### a. Some Important Common Things shared by Savitar and Surya :

- Both take birth daily and hence are treated as the **Mortals**.
- Both arrive in the world after Goddess **Dawn/Usha**.
- Both follow same path daily and spend major time in the **Mid-space**.
- Both send their light upward and illuminate **Heaven** and **Earth**.
- Both are designated as the **Adityas** and the **Asuras**.

### b. Some Major Dissimilar Features observed about Savitar and Surya :

- **Savitar** is specifically identified as the “**Son of Waters**” and not **Surya**.
- **Surya** is mentioned as the “**Eye of Varuna Mitra**” and not **Savitar**.
- **Savitar's** Ratha is pulled by Two Bay steeds, but **Surya's** Ratha is drawn by Seven Steeds.
- **Savitar's** rays has golden colour (golden arms), but **Surya** sends bright light.

**In sum**, the compiled information on the Two Rigvedic Gods clearly manifests that in **Rigved**, **Savitar** and **Surya** both Gods have been separately designated as the “**Adityas**” and also highlighted as the “**Asuras**”. Although both of them are responsible for lighting up the whole world, but as per the description given, the intensity of light radiated by of **Surya/Sun** is higher than **Savitar**. Still both are considered to be responsible for illuminating Heaven and Earth.

The most striking observation here is that, God **Surya** acts as the **Eye** of **Mitra** and **Varuna**, and not God **Savitar**. It means to say that, during the daytime, **Surya** keeps close watch on all the events/ happenings occurring on **Earth**, and reports the same to **Varuna** and **Mitra** who live in the Heaven, and hence in true sense, **Surya** is the **Spy** of the Gods residing in Heaven and not **Savitar** as the latter seems to be more active during early morning and the evening.

**Savitar's** identification as “**Apam Napat/the Son of Waters**” on the line of God **Agni** needs special attention, and hence this point has been dealt with in the subsequent sections.

#### IV. The Story of the Birth of Adityas :

As mentioned earlier, the Composers of **Rigved** have designated both **Savitar** and **Surya** as the **Adityas**. Hence before discussing about them, it is essential to understand the **Origin of the Adityas of Rigved**, and **their Place of Residence**. This would prepare necessary background for our discussion.

##### a. Relooking at the Birth of Adityas:

Right from the **Earliest** (Mandala-2) to the **Last Mandala** (Mandala-10) of **Rigved**, the Poets of different clans repeated talk about one common thing i.e. Goddess **Aditi** is the mother of many Gods popularly known as the “**Adityas**” in the text.

In the verse **Rv-2.27,8**; of the hymn devoted to **Adityas**, the Singer has given the names of **Six Adityas**. This is the only reference in **Rigved** where we find six names in a single verse.

# **Rv-2.27,8**: These hymns that drop down fatness, with the ladle I ever offer to the Kings **Adityas**.

May **Mitra**, **Aryaman**, and **Bhaga** hear us, the mighty **Varuna**, **Daksa**, and **Amsa**.

But through the verse **Rv-10.72,8**; the Poet informs us that **Aditi** has total **Eight Sons**.

**Rv-10.72,8**: अष्टौ पुत्रासो अदितेर्ये जातास्तन्वस परि |  
देवानुपप्रैत सप्तभिः परा मार्ताण्डमास्यत |

*aṣṭau putrāso aditerye jātāstanvas pari |*  
*devānupaprait saptabhiḥ parā mārtaṇḍamāsyat ||*

# **Eight** are the **Sons** of **Aditi** who from her body sprang to life.

With **seven** she went to meet the Gods she cast **Martanda** far away.

From the above verse, it is clear that in addition to **Martanda**, **Aditi** gives birth to **Seven more Children**. As no single verse of **Rigved** provides the names of all **Seven Adityas**, a question crops up; who are the other **Seven Sons** of **Aditi**?

The verse **Rv-10.72,8** also causes a fresh question, who is **Martanda**?

Apart from the Hymn **Rv-10.72**; **Martanda/ मार्ताण्ड** word is also found in the hymn **Rv-2.38** dedicated to **Savitar** (belongs to **Mandala-2**).

**Rv-2,38,8:** याद्राध्यं वरुणो योनिमप्यमनिशितं निमिषि जर्भुराणः ।  
विश्वो मार्ताण्डो वरजमा पशुर्गात सथशो जन्मानि सविता वयाकः ॥  
*yādrādhyam varuṇo yonimapyamaniśitaṁ nimiṣi jarbhurāṇaḥ |*  
*viśvo mārtaṇḍo vrajamā paśurghāt sthaśo janmāni savitā vyākaḥ ||*

In the verse **Rv-10.72,9** the Composer has given more information about Goddess **Aditi** and **Her Children**.

**Rv-10.72,9 :** *saptabhiḥ putrairaditirupa prait pūrvyam yugham |*  
*prajāyai mṛtyave tvat punarmārtāṇḍamābharat ||*

# So with her **Seven Sons Aditi** went forth to meet the earlier age.  
She brought **Martanda** thitherward to spring to life and die again.

In other words, out of the total eight sons of **Aditi**, Seven are identified as the immortal Characters immediately. But **Aditi's** eighth son, “**Martanda**” has some problem, which comes to life and then dies, means unlike others **He** has to follow life and death cycle again and again.

**Martanda** actually means **Mortal Egg**; who is **not immortal like other seven**, hence has been shown distinct from other Seven main-stream Gods/**Adityas**.

As the use of the word **Martanda** in the verse **Rv-2.38,8** is someway related to the behavioural aspect of **Savitar**, hence it can be assumed that God **Savitar** is the real **Martanda** in the minds of the Rigvedic Poets.

#### **b. Understanding the Concept of the Three Heavens and Three Earths of Rigved:**

The verse **Rv-2.27,8** from **Mandala-2** (the Earliest Mandala) belonging to the hymn dedicated to **Adityas** informs us that due to active support of the **Adityas**, **Three Heavens** and **Three Earths** are functioning properly.

The Poet of **Mandala-7** in the verse **Rv-7.87,5** of the hymn addressed to God **Varuna** gives more information on this ancient belief of the **Three Heavens** and the **Three Earth** as follows.

**Rv-7.87,5:** *tisro dyāvo nihitā antarasmin tisro bhūmīruparāḥ ṣaḍvidhānāḥ |*  
*ghṛtso rājā varuṇaścakra etaṁ divi preṅkhaṁhiraṇyayaṁ śubhe kam ||*

# On him **three heavens** rest and are supported, and the **three earths** are there in **six fold order**.

The wise King **Varuna** hath made in heaven that Golden Swing to cover it with glory.



**Rv-4.53,5** is the another verse taken from **Mandala-4** which also conveys similar thing.

**Rv-4.53,5 : trir antarikṣaṃ savitā mahitvanā trī rajāṃsi paribhus trīṇ i rocanā |**  
**tisro divaḥ** pṛ thivīs tisra invati tribhir vratair abhi no rakṣ ati tmanā ||

# **Savitar** thrice surrounding with his mightiness mid-air, **three regions**, and the triple sphere of light,  
Sets the **three heavens** in motion and the **threefold earth**, and willingly protects us with his triple law.

It means to say that during the pre-Rigvedic period itself, the ancient Rishis /the ancestors of the Rigvedic Singers had divided both Heaven and Earth into three parts each.

Since we are familiar with the geography of Earth, based on our knowledge, the Earth can be divided into Three Different Regions as given below.

1. Mountainous Region/Parvata: Highly elevated part of Earth
2. Flat Land/Plains/Bhumi: Where the People make colonies to reside and produce food.
3. Sea or ocean/Samudra: Where only water is seen everywhere.

The ancestors of Rigvedic Poets also believed that the **Heaven** actually consists of three different layers/zones as given in the verse **Rv-1.35,6** under.

# **Three heavens** there are; **two Savitar's, adjacent: in Yama's world is one**, the home of heroes,  
As on a linch-pin, firm, rest things **immortal**: he who hath known it let him here declare it.

Following verses from the Last Mandala provide additional information about the Heaven.  
The verse **Rv-10.64,3** inform us that **Yama** lives in Heaven. **Rv-10.135,7** retells us same thing.

**10.135,7:** Here is the seat where **Yama** dwells, that which is called the **Home of Gods**;  
Here minstrels blow the flute for him here he is glorified with songs.

Therefore, **Mid-Space** may be considered as the **interface** between the Earth and the Heaven and in the same region **Savitar** and **Surya** perform their daily journey from one end to other (in present state, it is nothing but a parabolic travel path).

Based on the above information, the **Three parts of Heaven** may be identified as;

1, and 2. regions located adjacent to regular path of **Savitar**, but above mid-space.

3. The highest Heaven where **Yama** resides

From the above, it can be said that as per the faith of the **pre-Rigvedic Seers**, God **Savitar** is regularly in touch with the Heaven as he daily moves close to it, on the other hand God **Surya/Sun** reports to God **Varuna** about the day-to-day events after the Sun-set only.

## **V. Establishing the Relationship between Savitar and Surya:**

As discussed earlier, **Savitar** and **Surya** daily arrive in the world after Goddess **Dawn/Usha**, illuminate both heaven and Earth, and then disappear after discharging their duties.

The Composers of **Rigved** have specifically mentioned that the radiance of **Savitar** is golden colour, means soft/gentle or that gives caring feelings. In the text **Savitar** has been illustrated as very sensitive and affectionate to the requirement of the People.

**Rv-1.35,9.** The golden-handed **Savitar**, far-seeing, goes on his way between the earth and heaven,  
Drives away sickness, bids the **Sun** approach us, and spreads the bright sky through the  
darksome region.

Whereas, **Surya's** rays are bright in colour (**Rv-1.50,1**), bring intense heat to the People.

**Rv-1.50,3 :** **Surya's** herald rays are seen afar refulgent o'er the world of men,  
**Like flames of fire that burn and blaze.**

In **Rigved** both **Savitar** and **Surya** are treated as the Solar Deities who illuminate the Heaven and the Earth during the daytime, then the fundamental question is, “why is the intensity of light of **Savitar** different from **Surya**?”

**or**

“What causes variation in the light intensity of **Savitar** and **Surya**?”

To find the answer for afore-stated question, there is a need to look at the pictures of the sunrise in the east (see figure-1, 2, 3). At the time of sunrise, the **Sun** appears golden in colour.



Figure-1-Sunrise in the morning.



Figure- 3; As if the Sun rising from waters (Apam Napat/Agni).



Figure- 2; Spread of Golden colour light and flying of a Bird in the morning.

Now see the photos of the **Sun** during the daytime (figure 4, 5 and 6). In the pictures given below, the **Sun** appears brighter in colour than the earlier figures.



Figure-4; The Sun in the sky.

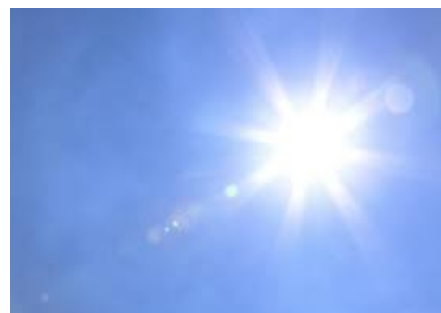


Figure-5; Clear Sun-shine.

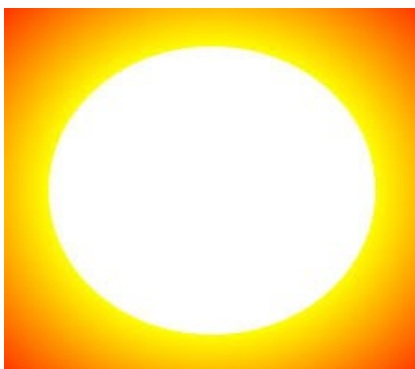


Figure-6- Full grown Sun radiating heat.

As a matter of fact, when sunrise occurs, at that time, only a upper part of the Sun (Sun's upper body) starts appearing slowly on the Horizon rather than its centre. Therefore, at the time of

sunrise, the radiance of Sun is warm and gentle, and functionally close to the description of God **Savitar** given in **Rigved**. But when the **Sun** ascends the sky, with upward movement, its light and heat intensity increases with time, and particularly during the afternoon of the summer season of Indian Sub-continent, heat becomes really unbearable.

Please take a close look at the verse **Rv-10.88,11** given below. The verse belongs to the hymn addressed to **Surya** and **Agni Vaishvanara** jointly.

**Rv-10.88,11:** यदेदेनमदधुर्यज्ञियासो दिवि देवाः सूर्यमादितेयम् |  
यदा चरिष्णू मिथुनावभूतामादित परापश्यन्भुवनानि विश्वा ||  
*yadedenamadadhuryajñiyāso divi devāḥ sūryamāditeyam |*  
*yadā carīṣṇū mithunāvabhūtāmādit prāpaśyanbhuvanāni viśvā ||*

# What time the Gods, whose due is worship, set him as **Surya**, Son of Aditi, in heaven,  
When the **Pair**, ever **wandering**, sprang to being, all creatures that existed looked upon them.

The most important thing here is the presence of a new word **मिथुन/Mithuna** in it. In the **Monier–Williams Dictionary** [3], its meaning is given as a “Pair or forming a Pair or Twins”, and most of the Vedic Commentators have used “pair” in their translations to indicate **Mithuna** word.

In the early part of the verse, the Singer talks about **God Surya** as the **Son of Aditi**, and in the second line he points out “**Always Wandering Pair**”. Since the hymn is also devoted to “**Agni Vaishvanara**”, hence it is quite possible that the ancient Sanskrit word **मिथुन/Mithuna** here means both **Surya** and **Savitar** (a pair or twins) the two well known celestial forms of God **Agni**.

Based on above discussion, it can be said that, in the early morning at that time of sunrise, the **Sun** resembles the God **Savitar**, and after sometime when it takes proper position in the sky, then fully glowing sun becomes “**Surya/Sun god**” of **Rigved**.

It is to be noted here that both **Savitar** and **Surya** are designated as the “**Adityas**” and the “**Asuras**” independently. But out of the two, the Singers have identified only **Savitar** as “**Apam Napat/ the Son of Waters**”, most likely due to **his** early rise. The **pre-Rigvedic Rishis** probably believed that mother **Earth** is surrounded by ocean/water from all sides which is the domain of God **Varuna**. In the beginning only a part of the **Sun** slowly comes out of water, spreading golden light and that is nothing but **Savitar** (Belief of the Priests- slow rise of **Savitar** is due to his **Ratha** is pulled by the **Two Steeds** and not by the **Seven Asvas/Mares** as that of **Surya**).

The probable sequence of the events occur during the morning session is given below.

- God **Savitar** gives signal to **Goddess Night (Nakta/Ratri)** to wind up her activities.
- First, Goddess **Dawn/Usha** appears in the world.
- God **Savitar** comes out of the waters slowly (hence called as “the Son of the Waters).
- After sometime, fully grown sun means **Surya** takes his position in the sky.

### c. Practical Explanation for the Dual Nature of the Sun as “Savitar and Surya”

As discussed elsewhere, Goddess **Aditi** gives birth to **Eight Sons**, out of which one is called as **Martanda** or **Mortal Egg** schematically shown as a Globe/Sphere in the figure-7.



Figure-7: “**Martanda or Mortal Egg/Globe or Celestial Sphere**” which comes up from the waters in the morning, and disappears in the evening.

We have seen earlier that, many ways **Savitar** and **Surya** are similar in nature, but since inception of **Rigved** both have been treated as the Two Distinct Characters. The Composer of the **Mandala-10** verse **Rv-10.88,11**, has presented both of them together as **मिथुन /Mithuna** “a pair that wanders regularly” or for practical consideration both may be assumed to be the “**Twins**”.

We have also discussed that the light produced by **Savitar** gives pleasant and soothing experience to all living beings, and the light created by **Surya** heats up everything. Therefore, a **Mortal Egg** shown above is purposely divided into two parts as depicted in the figure-8 and 9.

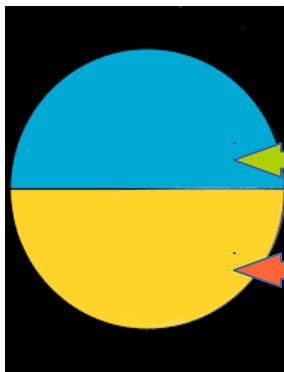


Figure-8; Celestial Sphere

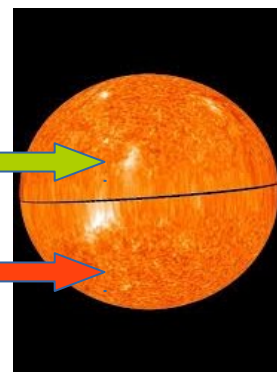


Figure-9; The Sun as a Globe

(All images/photographs are sourced from Internet/public domain)

As shown in the Figure-8, and 9; the upper part of the **Egg/Sphere/Globe** that slowly comes out first from the waters at the time of sunrise represents God **Savitar**. The lower part of the **Egg** in fully grown state makes God **Surya**.

In other words, since inception **Mother Earth** has only **One Sun**. In the present context when **Savitar** and **Surya** are considered as the “**Sayami Twins of Goddess Aditi**”, then it becomes easy to understand the **Commonness** and the **Oneness** of both Rigvedic Gods.

This would also provide proper answer to a question asked frequently, “why are the Rigvedic Gods **Savitar** and **Surya** treated as a single entity now? “

Probably that is why, in the verses **Rv-10.72,8 and 9** the Singer talks about **Aditi** leaving **Martanda/Mortal Egg** to his fate, and goes in the Heaven with her seven sons to meet her earlier form “**Aditi**”.

**Note:** Sometime back, there was a news in a print media reporting, a cow has delivered a calf/baby having two heads. Similarly, somebody posted a video on Internet showing a snake has two heads.

## **VI. Some Special Observations on the co-existence of “Savitar” and “Surya” in Rigved:**

1. Hymn **Rv-10.85** discusses mainly about the marriage of “**सूर्या/Suryaa**” who is the Daughter of God **Surya** with **Soma/Moon**. It is very strange but fact that, out of the total 47 verses of the said hymn, God **Surya** appears first, in the verse **Rv-10.85,1** which deals with the origin and the natural way of sustaining the various components of the World including Earth, Heaven, Surya/Sun, Soma/Moon as per the laws of Adityas. In the verse **Rv-10.85,18** **Surya/Sun** has been mentioned indirectly as the one who moves around and watches everything present in the world.

Whereas, in the verse **Rv-10.85,9**; God **Savitar** is described to have given consent or blessings to the Marriage of **Suryaa** (the daughter of the **Surya/Sun**) with **Soma/Moon**.

Surprisingly, in the verses pertaining to Marriage ritual (**verses 20 to 28**), God **Surya/Sun** is conspicuously absent, but several other Gods including **Savitar** are prominently present. In addition, **Savitar** is seen in action in the verse **Rv-10.85,36** along with Bhaga, Aryaman, Puramadhi at the time of handing over **Suryaa** (the bride) to **Soma/Moon** (the groom) probably indicates a ceremony similar to **Kanya-Dana/ कन्यादान** performed in present-day Hindu Marriage.

It means to say that, during the Marriage of “**सूर्या/Suryaa**”, God **Savitar** plays the role of her Father (foster?) and not God **Surya/Sun** though Vedic myth depicts **Surya/Sun** as the father of “**सूर्या/Suryaa**”. Then a fresh question arises, “where was her mother at that time?”

2. In the verse **Rv-1.35,7** belonging to the hymn dedicated to **Savitar**, the Poet has raised question on God **Surya**'s whereabouts.

# He, strong of wing, hath **lightened up the regions**, deep-quivering **Asura**, the **gentle Leader**.  
**Where now is Surya**, where is one to tell us to what celestial sphere his ray hath wandered?

It means, when **Savitar** is in action, **Surya** is not to be seen (possibly during early morning).

3. In the verse **Rv-1.123,3** devoted to Goddess **Usha/Dawn**, early in the morning, the Poet desires that in front of God **Surya**; God **Savitar** should declare that all the mortals are sinless (why?).

# If, **Dawn**, thou Goddess nobly born, thou dealest fortune this day to all the race of mortals,  
May **Savitar** the God, Friend of the homestead, declare before the **Sun** that we are sinless.

4. In the hymn **Rv-10.158** addressed to **Surya**, along with **Surya**, God **Savitar** is also invoked during Yajna ritual (either early morning or evening time Yajna).

In short, in some verses of **Rigved**, the Composers have shown both of them together at the same place. Then only possibility is that both Gods could be present on the occasion of Yajna ritual conducted by the Priests either during early morning (sunrise) or in the evening (sunset).

## VII. Present Status of God “Savitar” and God “Surya” in Hindu Philosophy:

Probably during the post-Vedic period (after the completion of composition of Four Vedas), the Members of the Priestly Community after the deliberation, might have come to the conclusion that there is no point in depicting **Savitar** and **Surya** as the two independent entities. Hence in the literature/ Puranas/Legends composed subsequently, both are shown as the Single Character only. Now in the Hindu Scriptures, we have God **Surya** who is also known as **Savita**.

Additionally, later on, the Priests also merged God **Mitra** the other Senior **Aditya** into God **Surya**. The Composer of the hymn **Rv-10.37** dedicated to God **Surya** has hinted about the same.

**Rv-10.37,7**: Cheerful in spirit, evermore, and keen of sight, with store of children, free from  
sickness and from sin,

Long-living, may we look, O **Surya**, upon thee uprising day by day, thou great as **Mitra** is!

## VIII. God “Indra” Goes After God “Surya/ Sun” and Goddess “Usha/ Dawn”:

Among the several myths found in **Rigved**, “Indra's act of removal of Wheel of Ratha of **Surya**”, and “his crushing of Ratha of Goddess **Usha**” are the very special stories as both characters are the Rigvedic Deities who arrive daily in the world and not the Enemies of Rigvedic Priests.

Therefore, to know more about these two myths, complete Rigvedic Text [1] has been scrutinized, and the pertaining verses that talk about the acts of **Indra** are placed as under.

Rv-4.17,14: He urged the chariot-wheel of **Surya** forward: **Etasa**, speeding on his way, he rested.

Him the black undulating cloud bedeweth, in this mid-air's depth, at the base of darkness,

Rv-4.28,2: Indu, with thee for his confederate, Indra swiftly with might pressed down the wheel of **Surya**.

What rolled, all life's support, on heaven's high summit was separated from the great oppressor.

Rv-4.30,4: When for the sake of those oppressed, and **Kutsa** as he battled,

Thou **stolest away the Sun's car-wheel**.

Rv-4.30,6: When also for a mortal man, **Indra**, thou speediest forth the **Sun**,

And holpest **Etasa** with might.

Rv-4.30,8: And this heroic deed of might thou, **Indra**, also hast achieved,

thou didst **smite to death** the Dame, **Heaven's Daughter**, meditating ill.

Rv-4.30,9: Thou, Indra, Mighty One, didst **crush Usas**, though Daughter of the Sky.

When lifting up herself in pride.

Rv-4.30,10: Then from **her chariot Usas fled**, affrighted, from her ruined car.

When the strong God had shattered it.

Rv-4.30,11: So there this car of **Usas** lay, **broken to pieces**, in Vipas,

And **she herself fled far away**.

Rv-10.73,6: Two of like name for him didst thou demolish, as **Indra striking down the car of Usas**.

With thy beloved lofty Friends thou camest, and with the assurance of thine heart thou slewest.

Rv-10.138,3: In the mid-way of heaven the **Sun** unyoked his car



Rv-10.138,5: Armed with resistless weapons, with vast power to cleave, the Vrtra-slayer whets his darts and deals fordi wounds.

Bright **Usas** was afraid of **Indra's slaughtering bolt**: she went upon her way and left **her chariot** there.

Since the references of both stories are mostly found in **Mandala-4** (One of the Early Mandalas) and in **Mandala-10** (the Last Mandala), it is crystal clear that both myths were making rounds in the minds of Vedic People since pre-Rigvedic time. It seems that the Rigvedic Poets through the composed Poems enjoyed making comments on the Two Deities.

Next step is to find the answers to two questions given below;

1. Why does **Indra** remove wheels of **Surya's** Ratha?
- 2 . Why does **Indra** crush Ratha of Goddess **Usha**?

The specially composed verses that highlight behavioural aspects of God **Surya** and Goddess **Usha** are given below (the verses from the Mandala-2, 3, 6, and 7 placed before 5, and 1)

Rv-2.19,6: Once to the driver of his chariot, Kutsa, he gave up **greedy Surya**, plague of harvest

Rv-3.30,12: **Surya** transgresses not the ordered limits set daily by the **Lord of Tawny Coursers**.

When to the goal he comes, his journey ended, his Steeds he loses: this is Indra's doing.

Rv-3.44,2: “In love thou maddest **Usas** glow, in love thou maddest **Surya** shine”.

Thou, **Indra, knowing, thinking, Lord of Tawny Steeds**, above all glories waxiest great.

Rv-6.58,3: O Pusan, with thy golden ships that travel across the ocean, in the air's mid-region,

Thou goest on an **embassy to Surya, subdued by love**, desirous of the glory.

Rv-7.75,5: She who is rich in spoil, the **Spouse of Surya**, wondrously opulent, rules all wealth and treasures.

Consumer of our youth, the seers extol her: lauded by priests rich **Dawn** shines out refulgent.

Rv-5.44,7: **Surya the Sage**, as if unwedded, with a **Spouse**, in battle-loving spirit moveth o'er the foes.

May he, self-excellent, grant us a sheltering home, a house that wards the fierce heat off on every side.

Rv-1.115,2: Like as a young man followeth a maiden, so doth **the Sun the Dawn**, refulgent Goddess:

Where pious men extend their generations, before the Auspicious One for happy fortune.

The verses given above though in mythical sense tell us about on-going love affair of God **Surya** with Goddess **Usha**. In the **Mandala-3** verses **Rv-3.30,12**; **Rv-3.44,2** the Singer has pointed out that God **Indra** is aware of their relationship who has already warned **Surya** about the same.

The verse **Rv-1.115,2** intimates us that “**Surya** follows **Usha**” as a young man chases an unmarried girl. It means to say that, in those days, romance between the two opposite gender persons was a common thing. Probably the Head of the family used to decide future course of action about such relationships. Therefore, being the head of the Rigvedic Deities, **Indra** issues necessary order to **Surya** not to exceed the limit and keep away from each other or not to indulge in such acts in future.

Despite instructing many times, when **Surya** and **Usha** do not listen to **Indra**, but continue their romance, then the latter decides to take punitive action against both. Therefore, **Indra** removes wheel of Ratha of **Surya**, and with Vajra/bolt strikes down Ratha of **Usha** as well, so that both would not go closer to each other again (lofty imagination of the Poets on a natural phenomenon).

Since Rigvedic Composers have projected **Indra** as the **Supreme Deity** of the world, then it becomes the primary responsibility of God **Indra** to initiate corrective action against a character if he/she is found violating the ancient laws.

When the Rigvedic Composers specifically talk about existence of “**सूर्या/Suryaa**” the daughter of **Sun god /Surya**, means the God is a married entity, but his spouse is missing. Even the Poet of the verses (see **Rv-10.85,20 to 28**) while covering the Marriage Event of “**सूर्या/Suryaa**” to **Soma/Moon** does not say a word about her mother. Also at the time of ritual, God **Surya** is not in a frame. In his absence, God **Savitar** does the needful. At the time of marriage, Goddess **Usha** is conspicuously absent. This subject needs a separate treatment, and hence can't be covered here.

From the above discussion, one thing is evident that the **Composers of Rigved** do not provide straightforward answer to any question that crops up in the mind of the Reader of the texts.

The Poet of the verse **Rv-1.164,45** has clearly highlighted this aspect indirectly. Griffith Translated verse **Rv-1.164,45** is given below for reference.

**# Speech hath been measured out in four divisions, the Brahmins who have understanding know them.**

**Three kept in close concealment cause no motion; of speech, men speak only the fourth division.**

In other words, the **Early Rigvedic Composers** had set a standard of excellence for all the Poets, and the several generations of the Priests followed it strictly. Still they have left many clues and hints about the pre-Rigvedic stories/beliefs of the Vedic Rishis in the **Five Late Mandalas**.

## **IX. Rigvedic Hymns Addressed to God “Savitar” and God “Surya”:**

### **Hymns dedicated to God Savitar**

**Rv-1.35**

**Rv-2.38**

**Rv-4.53**

**Rv-4.54**

**Rv-5.81**

**Rv-5.82**

**Rv-6.71**

**Rv-7.38**

**Rv-7.45**

**Rv-10.139**

**Rv-10.149**

Out of total Eleven Hymns, six belong to the class of the Five Early Mandalas (Mandala-2, 3, 4, 6, and 7 are treated as the Five Early Mandalas). Other Five are the part of the group of the Five Late Mandalas (Mandala-5, 8, 9, 1, and 10 are considered as the Five Late Mandalas).

### **Hymns addressed to God Surya**

**Rv-1.50**

**Rv-1.115**

**Rv-10.37**

**Rv-10.158**

**Rv-10.170**

**Rv-10.189**

These are six independent hymns addressed to God **Surya**, but here we find that all belong to the Two Late Mandalas (Mandala-1 and 10).

Additionally, there are three more hymns jointly addressed to two or more Deities

### **Combined Hymns**

**Rv-5.49 : Indra, Surya, Atri**

**Rv-1.191: Water, Grass and Surya/Sun**

**Rv-10.88 : Surya and Vaishvanara Agni**

Please note that, the hymns that are jointly addressed to two or more Deities, wherein God **Surya** is also present, also belong to the **Late Mandalas of Rigved**.

## X. Concluding Remarks :

**Pre-Rigvedic Rishis** believed that “**Agni**” is the real cause for the creation of everything in the world. Their descendants means the **Composers of Rigved** while composing the text carried forward the same line of thinking to promote the Earlier Vedic Philosophy. The **Rigved-specific** study conducted on the Two Rigvedic Gods “**Savitar**” and “**Surya**” has lead to the following conclusions.

- **Savitar** and **Surya** are the celestial forms of **Agni**. The Composers have also called both the characters as **सुपर्णा/Suparna** means the very high flying Bird like an Eagle.
- Both are treated as **Adityas** and **Asuras** independently.
- Based on the “**Martanda/Mortal-Egg**” model; **Savitar** and **Surya** can be considered as the two separate heads/phases of the **Sun**, very similar to present-day phrase -“**Sayami Twins**”.
- As at the time of sunrise, **Savitar** comes out of the waters first, **he** is specifically termed as “**Apam Napat/ the Son of Waters**”. On the basis early birth, **he** is senior to **Surya**.
- **Surya** is the full grown **Sun** whose intensity of light and heat much more than **Savitar**.
- **Savitar** is more effective during the early morning when **Dvipade** and **Chatuspade** want to give restart to life, and at the time of sunset when **Two footed** and **Four Footed** (all animals) return to their dwellings. But **Surya** plays the dominant role during the daytime.
- Since **Surya** surveys the whole world during entire day, **he** is called as the **Eye of Varuna** and **Mitra**.
- As per the Vedic myth, **Indra attacks Rathas of Surya and Usha** just to stop both of them coming together for romance. This is because as per the pre-Rigvedic belief, **Surya** is already married character and has a daughter from the marriage whose name is **सूर्या/Suryaa**.

## XI. Reference:

1. “**Rig Veda**”(Bilingual), Translated by **Ralph T. H. Griffith (1896)** in PDF
2. **Rig Veda ( Griffith Translation)-Table of Content, Alphabetical frequency etc. from the Intratext Digital Library available on [www.Intratext .com](http://www.Intratext.com)**
3. **Monier-Williams Dictionary**

**“It is relatively easy to question someone's answer than answering his/her question.”**